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THE NATIONAL FORESTS AND THE FISHERMAN

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

The days, when good fishing could be obtained just over the fence in Neighbor John's pasture, are gone. The advent of the efficient, popular-priced automobile together with roads leading into the most remote places, has resulted in the rapid depletion of the finny tribe from even our best waters. It has become necessary to resort to numerous schemes such as stocking with legal-sized fish calling for much enlarged fish hatchery facilities, limited periodic open seasons, and the inauguration of stream rotation to retain even a semblance of the original fish population.

The National Forests, with their thousands of miles of streams and unnumbered lakes, however, offer endless opportunities to the fisherman. In addition, on the National Forests the necessary restrictive measures have been supplemented by stream improvement work so that the streams may be made more habitable for fish life; the building of small dams thereby creating deeper water, the planting of protective covering along the banks, the creation of hiding places, the building of sluices to speed up the water and so reduce temperatures, and the introduction of suitable foods for the immature fish such as almost microscopic forms of plant and animal life.

The National Forests offer a variety of conditions to the fisherman. In the East, with its congested centers of population, the streams are heavily fished but even so, by following the measures just mentioned, they can be kept sufficiently stocked so that even the amateur can catch fish. The Green Mountain National Forest in Vermont, the White Mountains in New Hampshire, the Allegheny in Pennsylvania, the George Washington and the Jefferson in Virginia, the Monongahela in West Virginia, the Pisgah and the Nantahala in North Carolina, the Cherokee in Tennessee, and the Chattahoochee in Georgia, all offer the fisherman at least a reasonable opportunity to catch trout.

Fishing, to the real out-of-doors man, means much more than the mere catching of fish. It means an opportunity to come in closer contact with Mother Nature and learn her secrets; to see a mother grouse feign a broken wing and crawl off in anguish to lure the invader from her chicks; to listen to the thrilling notes of the hermit thrush; or to see a dragon fly nymph climb a reed from his watery home, split his shell, unfold his glossy wings, and sail away to view new worlds. If you fail to see or hear these things and they have for you no fascination, Mr. Man you have missed much that the out-of-doors has to offer and you are passing up many of the highlights of fishing.

The National Forests in the Lake States probably offer the greatest variety of fresh water fishing to be found in the United States. While you

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can find both stream and lake fishing on the Huron, the Ottawa, the Manistee and Upper Michigan National Forests in Michigan, and on the Chequamegon and Nicolet in Wisconsin, it is on the Chippewa and Superior in Minnesota that you really enter the fisherman's paradise--particularly on the latter forest. On the Superior with its myriad of lakes and streams and with its absence of roads, it is possible to get into the "back-beyond" country where fish are still plentiful. Most of the Superior can be traversed by canoe and each lake holds its surprise. You'll find bass and blue gills in one lake, pickerel and wall-eyed pike in another, lake trout in another, and if you crave brook trout fishing the Lake Superior North Shore country has it. The muskie is not found in these waters but his near relative the Great Northern pike (frankly he's just an overgrown pickerel) is present in numbers and he is worthy of the attention of any fisherman. Fifteen to twenty pound fish are by no means uncommon along the boundary waters. Sea Gull Lake, reached by road from Grand Marais on Lake Superior, produces lake trout up to thirty-five pounds in weight.

So much for the East. Now we'll journey "out where the West begins", where we climb the Continental Divide and beyond. We are approaching the home of the cut-throat and steel-head trout. We are entering the region where there can still be found primitive conditions; where a man can lose himself in the solitudes and safely talk out loud to his horse, his dog, or himself without danger of being heard. Most of our larger western trout streams, although heavily fished, continue to furnish excellent sport. Roads, as in the East, have resulted in the depletion of many of our smaller streams, but western trout streams, with their headwaters in the high mountains, maintain more regular levels, are freer from silt, and have much lower temperatures. As a result they restock naturally with very little assistance and respond rapidly to even moderate protection.

Numerous primitive areas have been set aside in the high country where the building of roads, cabins, or other improvements is not countenanced and where the only means of access is over the most rugged trails. It is areas such as these that beckon to the man who desires to emulate his early forebearers, put a pack on his back and start off into the woods alone, entirely dependent upon his own resources for his sustenance, comfort, and safety.

Practically all the National Forests west of the Great Plains offer good trout fishing. A few of the better rivers, with their attending tributaries which may be mentioned are the Coeur d'Alene, Lochsa, and Salmon in Idaho; the Yakt, South Fork of the Flathead, and the Stillwater in Montana; the Green, Wind, and Encampment in Wyoming; the Rio Grande, Gunnison, and Frying Pan in Colorado; the Skagit, Skykomish, and Cowlitz, in Washington; the Rogue, McKenzie, and Deschutes in Oregon; the Klamath, Feather, and Tuolumne in California; the Pecos and the Brazos in New Mexico; and the White and the Blue in Arizona.

The National Forests, administered for integrated, multiple use--timber, forage, wildlife, and recreation--welcome you. So get out that

old trout rod, sort over your flies (don't forget the coachman) and start for the mountains where the ozone is pure and invigorating and where you can forget the many little formalities of civilization. Just one brief word of caution. It goes without saying that you are a good conservationist and this being true, take no chance with fire. A thoughtless, careless moment with your cigarette, your pipe heel, your match or your campfire and the trip will be ruined and all the regrets in the world cannot repair the damage to your, and to my, out-of-doors.

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